

**For Immediate Release**

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**Scabies Outbreak at OTMH**

The Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) Infection Prevention and Control Service (IPCS) has identified an outbreak of scabies at Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH). An investigation has revealed that a significant number of staff have contracted this condition from one infected patient on the 3 West inpatient unit.

Scabies is an infectious skin condition caused by a mite. It causes skin irritation and itchiness, has an incubation period of 2 to 6 weeks and is mainly transferred where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact.

The hospital has undertaken a number of steps to curtail the outbreak including:

- Giving treatment to more than 30 symptomatic staff and their family members who have been exposed through close personal contact with the symptomatic staff member.
- Giving treatment to staff without symptoms (asymptomatic), but who had direct exposure to this patient.
- Having contacted the two discharged patients who had shared a room with the infected patient in the past six weeks.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of all others who may have had a direct exposure.

Individuals who are treated are not considered contagious following treatment. Exposed individuals who do not have symptoms are not contagious.

“Our initial treatment efforts were hampered by a province-wide shortage of the lotion used to treat scabies. The preferred approach is to treat everyone affected at the same time. Due to the drug shortages, treatment efforts have been staggered with a goal of treating symptomatic individuals before others in order to terminate further spread,” said Dr. Neil Rau, Medical Director of Infection Control and Infectious Diseases Specialist at HHS. “All known symptomatic staff have been treated. Asymptomatic staff who may have been exposed have been contacted

by our Occupational Health & Safety Department to provide preventative treatment. Inpatients on the unit where the patient is located are also receiving preventative treatment.”

Scabies is endemic in the community, meaning that some people are asymptomatic carriers, while others are mildly affected by an itchy rash. Scabies is treated with an over-the-counter product that is usually available in most drug stores. The majority of cases resolve with one treatment. A small number may require a second treatment. The last known outbreak of scabies at OTMH occurred in 1990.

“We are very sorry for the distress and inconvenience this has caused our staff and patients,” continued Dr. Rau. “We are offering support and treatment to a very large number of individuals and will continue to do so. We sincerely hope to find no further cases and we are taking all the necessary steps to alert people and encourage those who think they have been exposed to seek appropriate follow-up.”

Forty discharged patients who *may* have been exposed and have a *slight risk* of developing scabies are being contacted by the Hospital and advised to monitor themselves and to see their family physicians if they experience symptoms. Hospital officials will be monitoring patients and staff at the Hospital for the maximum incubation period of six weeks to ensure there are no further transmissions. In addition, the Hospital has been providing Halton Region Public Health with regular updates and will continue to keep them apprised of the situation.

“There are no unit closures or visiting restrictions as a result of this outbreak. It remains very safe to come to the Hospital for treatment or to visit,” concluded Dr. Rau.

Former OTMH patients or family members of current patients who have questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the HHS Patient Relations office at 905-845-2571, ext. 6847.

Information about scabies is available on the HHS website at [www.haltonhealthcare.com](http://www.haltonhealthcare.com).

For more information, please contact  
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